

SonrÃ-e

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Summary: As Spain is leaving another boring World Conference, he notices another nation sitting alone, staring glumly into the air - Sweden. Spain decides to go talk with the Northern European country and make him smile - or try to, at least.

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As the World Conference wound down and Germany said his closing remarks, many of the nations were already gathering their things and headed out the door, much to his frustration.

Seated far from the exit, Spain just sat back in his seat and stretched while there was a large blockage of nations at the doorway. Sure, the meeting was quite boring and he couldn't even remember what it was supposed to be about, but it wasn't worth it to try to squeeze along with everyone else out the door. Instead, he just spaced out for a while, daydreaming about his tomato garden.

By the time he snapped out of his daze, the room was entirely empty. Spain shrugged to himself as he stepped out into the lounge area just outside the conference room. To his surprise, there was still a single nation seated on a couch, glaring angrily into the airâ€"the Northern European kingdom, Sweden.

Spain raised an eyebrow. How odd it was to see Sweden without Finland, or any of the other Nordic countries. "Hey, Sweden!" Spain greeted with a happy wave. "_Â¿CÃ³mo estÃ;is?_"

Sweden turned his full glare towards Spain.

"Uhâ€|" Spain stuttered, unaccustomed to Sweden's fierce expression. "_Hola_, Sweden. Iâ€| I was just wondering how you were. Where's

Finland? He's normally with you, isn't he?"

"Normally, yes," Sweden said, unsmiling. "But he 'nd Estonia went s'mewhere t'gether. 'Mwaiting for them." With that brief explanation, Sweden fell silent, never taking his bespectacled glare off Spain.

Spain squirmed a bit before finally saying, "Sweden, why do I never see you smile except around the other Nordics?"

"You've seen me smile 'round the other Nordics?" he replied, almost accusatorily.

Spain flinched before grinning, trying to lighten the mood. "Come on, I'm Spain, the kingdom of passion. Of course I'm going to notice when you enjoy yourself!"

"â€œI see."

"Youâ€œ still haven't answered my question."

Sweden shrugged. "People're normally intimidated by me and run b'fore I get a chance to."

"Well, I haven't left yet, but you still aren't smiling."

"You haven't giv'n me a reason to."

Spain raised an eyebrow. "Is that a challenge? I'll take that as a challenge."

"Hmm," Sweden said noncommittally.

Spain grinned. "Well then, let's see if I can get you to smile." With that, he dashed away, only to come back a moment later with a Spanish guitar in his hand. "Let me play something for you!"

"Where'd you get that?"

"Where does Hungary keep her frying pan?" Spain replied absentmindedly, plucking the strings softly to see if they were in tune. Once he was satisfied with the tuning, he took a moment to take a breath before launching into a fast-paced, intense flamenco song.

Admittedly, it was somewhat nerve-wracking at first for the Iberian country to play for such a stern-faced audience, especially since flamenco was such a lively genre that the audience often would have clapped along to, but as the piece played on, Spain started to smile as he got into the flow of the music.

Until he looked back up at Sweden, that is. Sweden's face was as impassive as beforeâ€œperhaps even more so, if that were possible. Spain ended the song with an elaborate flourish, but his audience still showed no signs of enjoyment or indeed any emotion.

After an awkward moment of silence, Sweden finally spoke, still stony-faced. "Flamenco?"

Spain nodded nervously. "An Andalusian tradition with origins in the

Romani people, though with major influence from other various Spanish ethnic groups."

"Mm," Sweden said. After another moment of hesitation, he added, "You've interacted w'th a lot of other cultures over the years, haven't you. Abroad, too."

"Hmm? The Spanish Empire, are you talking about?"

"Mm," Sweden agreed. "The Spanish Empire was spread 'cross the world. I explored a little as a Viking, but even the Swedish Empire was limited to North'rn Europe."

"Oh, God, the Swedish Empire. You were terrifying back then! A member of the Kalmar Union, suddenly turning against Denmark and then taking half of the Baltic Statesâ€"and then continuing to expand your influence all around the Baltic Sea! When you started to head for Holy Rome, I can't say I wasn't concerned about you coming all the way south to Spain, even."

"Really? I never planned to do thatâ€"you were a powerf'l empire at the time, too. Doubt I would've been able to d'feat you."

"Me, really?" Spain said. "Well, I suppose I was a pretty great power at the time. But my influence was concentrated almost entirely in the Americas. Well, aside from South Italy. â€|And the Philippines. â€|Uh, and various parts of Africa. Andâ€""

Sweden cleared his throat to cut off Spain, who let out a surprised yelp. "I had a brief colony in the Americas, too, 'til Netherlands kicked me an' Finland out. And same with part of Ghana, 'til Denmark took it over. But I hardly interacted w'th the native peoples of either place."

Spain shook his head and sighed. "There's a big controversy over colonial states, now, over exactly this issue. You should be glad you're not a big part of it. Conquering somewhere isn't so much getting to know the other nation's culture; it's imposing your own on theirsâ€"not that that's what you think about at the time. It's particularly bad when you're dealing with people whom you think of as 'uncivilized' at the time. Honestly, being a former global empire is not all it's cracked up to be. Worldwide fame and recognition and influence, sureâ€"but also resentment, and guilt, and generally just a big bag of mixed feelings. Not what I want to deal with, when all I want to do is go have fun, maybe take a siesta, and generally just think about the friends that I have, not any enemies that I might have made."

"I underst'nd completely," Sweden said. "'Vebeen trying to get close t' other countries recentlyâ€"but I have the same 'ntimidating face as I did when I was a Viking. I have to deal w'th the consequences now of having such a bloodthirsty history. Perhaps it's not exactly like your issues, but it's nice to talk w'th someone about it, sometimes."

"Certainly, mi amigo," Spain said. "Althoughâ€| I was trying to get you to smile. This isn't exactly the most uplifting conversation topic, is it?"

"P'rhaps not, but as I said, I've been trying t' be more social with

others. Maybe 't's our hardships that connect us, not just happy times. In any case, thank you f'r sharing both with meâ€"the music and your thoughts on your past."

"_Â;Pues claro!_ Please, if you want to talk to me about this againâ€"or anything else, reallyâ€"feel free to call me up, or even just show up at my door. It's nice to make new friends."

"Friendâ€| _VÃ¤nâ€|" Sweden sounded out the word as if it were foreign to him, though it was a native Swedish word. Finally, he stood up and took Spain's hand, giving Spain the smile he wanted all alongâ€"a small smile, certainly, but one that unmistakably showed his happiness. "_Tack_, Spain. â€|That is, _gracias_. "

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><p>Author's Note: If I had to choose, Sweden and Spain would probably be my favorite two characters in Hetalia, so I wanted to write a fic about them. However, they don't seem to have ever really even met each other in Hetalia, and even historically they've had very little interaction. But hey, we can always make characters talk to each other in fanfiction! And besides, the juxtaposition between the bubbly and happy Spain against the serious-faced Sweden seemed like a good enough premise in and of itself.

Considering Spain and Sweden have had so little historical interaction, there's a surprising amount of history/culture that got incorporated in this fic. I'm going to try to summarize my findings, but this was all found on quick Google searches and Wikipedia scans; please correct anything that is wrong here. Also, this section became a lot longer than I thought it would beâ€"literally only a few words shorter than the fic itself. Whoops.

Well, let's start with the easiest parts: the Spanish and Swedish words. I don't speak either language, so the words used are just a bunch of dictionary translations:

Ã;cÃ³mo estÃ¡s? â€" How are you? (Spanish)
>holo â€" hello (Spanish)
>mi amigo â€" my friend (Spanish)
>_Â;Pues claro! â€" But of course! (Spanish)
>vÃ¤n â€" friend (Swedish)
>tack â€" thank you (Swedish)
>gracias â€" thank you (Spanish)
>sonrÃ-e â€" the informal second-person imperative of "smile" (Spanish)â€"I would assume that Spain would use the informal form, given the lighthearted mood between them and their ultimate conclusion that they are, in fact friendsâ€"but I certainly don't understand the nuances of the tÃº and ustÃ©d forms of "you."

And then comes the history. Let's start with Spainâ€"the only historical reference to his history in this fic is the reference to the Spanish Empire, which had roots in the 1300s but didn't really start until Columbus's (in)famous voyage in 1492, and lasted pretty much until the end of the 1800s, though it continued to hold colonies well into the 1900s (Western Sahara was freed in 1975, though its political status now is super complicated). All the regions Spain lists in this fic are reaches of his empire.

And then there's Sweden. I had absolutely zero knowledge of Swedish history before this fic (literally, "Swedish Empire" was not a term I had heard of), so bear with me.

Vikings were from Scandinavia, but apparently there was little distinction between the, say, Swedish Vikings and Norwegian Vikings—“they were all just Vikings. In any case, they did a lot of travel and trade all over Europe and into Iceland and Greenland and maybe even Canada and the Middle East. “Europe” presumably includes Spain as well, but let's ignore that for the sake of this fic. The whole Viking period took place roughly from the 9th century to the 11th century.

Over the next few centuries, Sweden as an independent state/kingdom started to develop (note that Finland was simply a region in Sweden at this time). In 1397, Scandinavia became reunited as the Kalmar Union, led by the Danish monarchy—this was actually just an agreement between Sweden and Denmark, but since Norway was part of Denmark at the time and Iceland, Greenland, and various other islands were part of Norway, the Kalmar Union's extent reached pretty much the entire Nordic region.

Sweden and Denmark did not get along, however, and 1523, Sweden declared itself independent. This is the story that the Hetalia manga strip/animé episode retells in "Running Away with Su-San" / "Running Away with Mr. Sweden."

In the latter half of the 16th century into the 17th century, Sweden grew in power, gaining control over much of Estonia and Latvia in a war with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This was the story told in the second part of "Su-san and I" in the Hetalia manga/animé. It seems that an alternate telling of it was in the Polish-Swedish Wars comic strip.

That was the start of the Swedish Empire, roughly speaking (the exact date is usually given as 1611). Sweden then expanded into parts of Norway and the Holy Roman Empire. He started to lose these territories into the middle of the 18th century, ultimately losing even Finland to Russia in 1809.

In 1638, in the middle of the Swedish Empire, he tried to set up a colony in America, in the modern-day Philadelphia/Delaware region. Netherlands, though, had already colonized the modern-day New York City area, and so while Sweden was occupied with expansion over in Europe, Netherlands took the opportunity to take over New Sweden in 1655. I don't actually know if the Swedish had to interact with Native Americans much at the time, despite what I said in this fic. This whole situation was portrayed in the Hetalia strip/episode "The Battle for America."

Sweden also went into Ghana briefly, setting up the Swedish Gold Coast in 1650, but like the Netherlands in America, Denmark kicked him out within two decades—Denmark took it over as part of the Danish Gold Coast in 1663. It seems that Sweden isn't too great with holding onto far-away colonies.

Finally, we have cultural aspects that this fic touched on. Let's start with flamenco: the dancing, singing, and guitar-playing tradition. Each of Spain's regions ("nationalities" is the technical term) has a fairly different culture, with an official national

policy to promote traditional cultures. Flamenco is from one of these regions, Andalusia, which seems to have a large population of Romani and Moriscos; thus, flamenco has influences from primarily these two groups.

And here's where things could get potentially offensive: the Romani are the group that are often called "gypsies" (in Spanish, gitanos), but the termâ€| may or may not be offensive, depending on where you look it up. They're a people originally from Northern India who have been forced to relocate from place to place (thus their characterization as a traveling people), and thus can be found across the Southern and Eastern Europe.

Continuing to tread of potentially offensive grounds, the Moors (in Spanish, moros) were Muslims in Southern Europe (originally, only referring to Arabs, but later expanding to any Muslim). When Spain outlawed Islam in the 1500s, these people became known as Moriscos after they were forced to abandon their religionâ€"and there was still animosity towards them. Both terms, as far as I can tell, are not racially offensive in a historical context, but may or may not be offensive if used to refer to modern day people.

Finally, as Spain said in this fic, colonialism has come to be considered morally wrong, because it's oppressing the native peoples' way of life. In 1960, the United Nations adopted a policy of decolonization (Resolution 1514), with the goal of making all territories self-governing. There're still a number of non-self-governing territories even today, but they've had quite some influence at convincing countries to give up their colonies (e.g. Spain and Western Sahara).

And I believe that should be everything I've referenced in this fic. Please correct any part of this that was incorrect (and if you read through all of this, sorry for infodumping this all on you all at once; there was a lot more that I looked up about this than I thought).

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><p>Published April 9, 2016

End
file.